

thus successfully withstood the demand of the mother or nurse at the required time and place, they then, a few moments later, relax control and soil their clothes or the floor. With many children this process goes on for months, or even years. Now, if we look at the unconscious meanings of excremental processes and products, as seen, for instance, in some of the remarks in the school records, it is easier to understand why the child so often behaves in this way. The primary wish to retain the faeces, for the sake of the greater erotic pleasure so obtained, would not, in itself, account for such obstinate defiance. In all these cases of great difficulty, one can be quite sure that this primary attitude has been overlaid by phantasies of the dangers of letting out bad, poisonous, attacking substances. The faeces have become identified with the bad wishes, bad thoughts, hostility and greed of the child. They represent dead things, which the child has produced from the good food his mother gave him, and instead of the good babies which his mother can produce. He is terrified of being discovered in possession of such bad substances, and it seems safer to defy his mother's request, by withholding the faeces and keeping control of them, than to yield them up at her demand. The question of control by another person is enormously important for these children. They are really terrified of allowing other persons to dictate to them about bodily processes. It becomes (in phantasy) a matter of life and death to remain in control of one's own body and one's own evacuations. In the analysis of adults, it becomes quite clear that in unconscious phantasy it really is death that is apprehended by the child, should he yield himself

up and relax to the demands of the mother from
the outside,
and the pressure of the faeces from the
inside. He must
prove to himself, over and over again, that he
can please
himself and that *he* is in control. Having
proved this, he
can then relax and allow the sphincters to
relax. And
thus he soils his garments or the floor.

The precise details and precise colouring of
these phantasies
vary from individual to individual. Something on
the general
lines I have described will, however, always be
found in the
case of children who are difficult and stubborn
in this matter.¹

¹ See letter 6 on p. 131 as an example of excessive,
probably psychotic,
reactions.